July 15, 1931

Dr. Charles C. Williamson
Director of Libraries

Dear Sir:

I have the honor to submit the following report on the first year's work of the Department of Rare Books for the period ending with the 30th of June 1931:

The work began in the new Department with the installation of the Seligman Library of Economics. The arranging and cataloging of this library was taken up in June 1930. The technical equipment was finished in its entirety some time after the beginning of the winter semester when the premises were fully occupied.

The use of the Department began immediately after the installation of books on the shelves. An official opening was inaugurated by an afternoon tea given to members of the University community and to friends of the Library on Wednesday February 25th. Exhibits of interesting material from the various collections were laid out for inspection. An exhibit of interesting items from the Seligman Collection had previously been arranged by the Librarian of the University in Avery Hall.

The work in the various special collections of the Department is described as follows:

Seligman Library of Economics

The work in this collection, the Dale Library and the Smith Collection was carried out under the special care and supervision of Miss Darthula Wilcox. By the end of June 1931 the classification and preliminary listing by authors of the main body of books was completed. In order to make possible the immediate use of the Library a temporary classification was worked

out to fit the present arrangement of the material. All books are in a definite place and available. While the collection from the very beginning has proved its value to a number of serious students, its popularity with casual visitors has increased with the growing attraction which care and organization may have given the general appearance of the rooms. As a result of the special restrictions in the use of the Library, the number of students has not been a high one, but those who were admitted have taken full advantage of this privilege. Professor Seligman has been a frequent visitor and it seems that he is in sympathy with the present arrangement.

Dale Library of Weights and Measures

The books in this collection have been arranged and the cataloging has gotten well under way. Several hundred cards are already in the Main Catalogue. This library also has attracted a good many visitors.

Smith Collection of Mathematics and Orientalia

The material in this collection gradually reached the Department during the course of the year. Professor David Eugene Smith supervised the transfer of his collection and has brought in personally many individual pieces from his collection of Oriental rarities. The books are arranged on the shelves, the History of Mathematics Collection according to their classification. No cataloging has as yet been done. Prof. Smith has been a frequent and interested visitor in the several collections of the Rare Book Department.

A collection of unbound Brander Matthews letters have been placed in a special locked filing case.

Various reference questions in the fields of the special collections have come up and have been answered to the best knowledge of the librarian.

Several assistants have worked in these special collections, each for a different length of time. They are mentioned in the order in which they followed one another: Mr. A. Findley, Mr. R. Miner, Miss D. Applegate, Miss K. Bruce, Miss T. Galdi. Mr. Sidney Kramer, the assistant of the Curator of the Department, has also worked at various intervals in the special collections.

Apart from the care for these special collections, the Rare Book Department has been developed to demostrate in its material the history as well as the contemporary aspects of book production. The history of Writing and Illumination, of Printing and Illustration, of Bookbinding and Papermaking, of Bookselling and Publishing, have been considered. Although a fair amount of attention has been given to each of these branches, the development has to some extent been influenced by the immediate demands of the instructors and students giving or taking courses in these fields at the School of Library Service. The construction has been carried out in tow principal directions. First, the collection of a reference library in book production. Second, the gathering of outstanding original specimens to illustrate the various phases of book production in the historic, technical, and aesthetic senses.

Two methods of acquisition have been used. The majority of the volumes have come to the Department through transfer from the Main Library, and in some cases from other departmental collections. A routine for the procedure has been established. A good many volumes, especially in the specimen collection, have been purchased through the regular channels as well as from auction sales at home and abroad. Some items have been bought directly from private individuals.

It must be admitted that the funds provided for the new department have thus far proved more than satisfactory. However, the fact that a con-

siderable sum has not been used up, should by no means be interpreted as a sign of superfluous allowance. It merely signifies that the various activities implied in the organization of a new department have not left time for more than the immediately necessary acquisitions. There are still many gaps to be found even in the elementary material which have to be filled gradually, before the acquisition can begin to concentrate on individual items of exceptional interest and value.

The main bulk of the Reference Collection is formed by the books which were classified originally under the numbers 016. to 019. With the exception of a few subdivisions, these sections have been transferred to Schermerhorn Hall as a whole. Most of the material has been placed on the locked shelves in Room 504, where their use began immediately. The opportunity of direct contact with this collction so far has proved a valuable experience for students working in the book production field, and advantage has been taken of the possibility to use not only individual volumes, but entire groups of publications on a given subject by going to the particular case.

The material has been increased considerably not only by filling up individual gaps and through regular acquisitions of recent publications, but also by the transfer of important subject groups. Book Illustration thus far has been collected at the Avery Library. The material bought from General Library funds and shelved provisorily in Avery Library has been transferred to the Rare Book Department without difficulty. The transfer of book illustration material from the original Avery bequest and of acquisitions from the Avery funds is at present being considered.

Another important group in process of transfer is Palaeography and Mediaeval Epigraphy. As an important acquisition in this field, a complete set of the publications of the Russian Palaeographic Society is to be mentioned.

It is the only complete set in this country. Another important and valuable set acquired recently is D. A. Rovinskii's Russian Popular Pictures, 7 atlases of hand colored reproductions and five volumes of text. Professor Rockwell's course in Palaeography planned for the coming winter session will be given at the new department where full use of the Library material will thus be possible.

It may be of interest to note that the 019. reference collection was originally, by rough estimate, about 45 shelves. It has increased by about 18 more shelves in the first year, notwithstanding the fact that no particular energy was concentrated on the increase of this material.

The reclassification of the entire group, to correct errors of the past as well as to provide classification space for the more specific collection that is developing, is one of the most important tasks for the immediate future. The catalogue cards resulting in this process will be the foundation of a much needed subject catalogue to cover all important questions of book production literature.

In the building up of the Original Specimen Collection the process of transfer from the General Library has also been used to some extent. It is worthwhile to mention that through the efforts of a group of Library School students, cards for books in the library printed by famous historical printers were collected and have been used as a basis of transfer. In cases where transfer is not advisable, the cards are being used as an informal index to the work of these printers in the Library. The Dewey number 017. has been developed for the Specimen Collection.

More than in the reference section, acquisitions on the market have contributed to the building up of the Specimen Collection. Among the material purchased during the first year, the following items deserve to be specifically mentioned:

A group of single leaves of mediaeval manuscripts for the purposes of palaeographic demonstration;

A copy of the Insel-Verlag facsimile of the Manessa Manuscript;

A copy of Turrecremata's Explanatio in Psalterium, Augsburg, J. Schüssler, 1472, as an exceptionally well preserved incunabulum;

A complete set of K. Haebler's Original Specimen pages of Incunabula in Germany, Holland, France, England, Spain and Italy

Illustrated books of the 19th century, especially from France, Germany, Russia and England, the latter including special collections of Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane's work, partly in first editions;

Modern illustrated books;

Modern Press books especially from England, Holland, the United States;

A collection of German Press books, selected from the material shown at the Grolier Club in 1928;

A group of historical children's books from Mr. Wilbur Macey Stone's noted collection; and individual items from other sources;

Modern illustrated children's books from England, Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, Russia and the United States;

Historical and modern type specimen books;

A group of historical end-papers.

The collection of lantern slides on book production of the School of Library Service has been transferred to the Rare Book Department. A number of necessary additions have been made and will be made in the future. A card catalogue to be filed with the slides themselves is being prepared.

The range of subjects covered by the Department is so wide that the present material is of course to be considered only as a beginning. It is evident from the list of acquisitions mentioned above that entire fields, such as illustrated books in the 15th, 16th, and 18th century have as yet not been touched. It is planned to have on the shelves of the Rare Book Department, as far as possible, only books in good state of preservation as well as in attractive bindings. A good deal of repair work had to be done. The collaboration of the firm of James MacDonald and Son, Bookbinders, is to be mentioned for the individual care with which they have carried out the orders of the department. A book plate for the Specimen collection was worked out which carries the call number, as well as its significance as a mark of ownership, so that direct markings on the volumes can be avoided.

Several presents were given to the Department during the year. Apart from individual volumes, two items are to be mentioned specially:

A hand mould for the casting of type was given by Mr. Henry Lewis Bullen of the American Typefounders Company Library;

A collection of over 50 Gutenberg medals came to the Department from Mr. Edward E. Bartlett of the Bartlett Orr Press, with the understanding that they were to be preserved intact and designated as the "Edward E. Bartlett Gift of Gutenberg Memorabilia".

These presents, apart from their obvious intrinsic value, are to be welcomed as gestures of acknowledgement of the new department in its own field.

The use of the Collections has been satisfactory; not only the students of the Library School, but also other students, especially of the Department of English, and several members of the faculty, have taken advantage of the new facilities.

Some of the first year's experience may be touched upon, because they seem to bring out points which it may be profitable to consider in planning the future quarters in the Main Library building.

The advantages of having the reference collection in book production on the walls of the reading room itself have already been mentioned. Also the fact of the probable rapid growth of the collection has been touched upon. It is not saying too much that the group classified under 016. to 019. may easily expand to twice its present size within a very limited mumber of years. It may not be necessary or even advisable to have these books in locked cases as at the present, but on the other hand, it is no material fitted by its nature to be kept in the stacks.

Another point is the advisability of having a separate office for the Curator of the Department. It has been somewhat of a problem to work out a fair division of time between the Library and teaching duties. Concentration desirable for certain phases in both directions have at times become difficult on account of the immediate accessibility of his desk from the corridor. Salesmen of low grade and second hand dealers for instance have taken advantage of the present arrangement. Perhaps a separate room of no matter how small size, but not directly accessible to the general public, and containing no books other than the personal research library of the Curator, will prove a satisfactory solution.

Since the Rare Book Department, apart from its services to the University Community itself, has been called into existence also to manifest to a more general public the interest of the University Library in the current world of book history and book production, steps have been taken in this direction.

Exhibitions sponsored by the Department are to be mentioned. At an early period in the academic year, the Curator by request of the Librarian, prepared an exhibit in Avery Hall. Books were gathered from the general resources of the Library and presented under the title of "Five Centuries of Book Design". Well directed newspaper publicity given on this occasion resulted in a more general interest of the public. As a literary result of the exhibit an article on the subject was written by the Curator by request of the Editor of the Columbia University Quarterly, and published with several illustrations in Number 2, June 1931, of this magazine.

In collaboration with the American Institute of Graphic Arts and the Institute of Czechoslovak Studies, an exhibiton was shown of "Modern Books and Posters of Czechoslovakia", on the fifth floor corridor of Schermerhorn Hall, displaying material gathered by the "Typographia", the leading graphic arts association of Prague. The exhibition was formally opened on the evening of Friday, May 22nd. Dr. Joseph Lavička, acting Consul General of Czechoslovakia, as the guest of honor and Professor C. A. Manning were the speakers. The Librarian of the University presided at the successful and well attended meeting.

Also through the courtesy of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, The Fifty Books of the Year 1930 were brought to Columbia, and are, at the present moment, on display at Avery Hall.

The Curator was asked to join a committe, formed on behalf of the American Institute of Graphic Arts for the purpose of holding a series of so-called Bookbuilding Clinic Luncheons, held at the Advertising Club of New York, for the advancement of better printed trade editions in this country.

The nomination of the Curator as one of the Vice-presidents for the coming year of the American Institute of Graphic Arts is not to be considered so much a sign of personal appreciation, but as rather an acknowledgement of

the University's interest in current book production problems, and may therefore be mentioned in this connection.

A series of book reviews on the current "Books on Bookmaking" contributed to the monthly Book Production issue of "Publisher's Weekly" by the Curator, is to be listed as a result of his work in the Rare Book Department.

Mr. Sidney Kramer has given all the time which he could spare from his general course of studies to his work as assistant to the Curator. He has not only worked with considerable energy and concentration, but has also displayed a genuine interest and understanding.

Respectfully submitted,
Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt

Curator of the Rare Book Department